

## 2961BDTE070

Transcription of 2961BA0E070, M4b 1979 Sept 27 Q&A, continuation of questions from 2961ADTE070. Questions and L's notes are found at 29610DTE070. The transcription contains only the Q&A. Lonergan then started to lecture on the chapter on religion. That part of the recording is not transcribed here.

**Lonergan is still responding to the question:** Second, there is the fact that your position is a critical realist position. In your writing you attempt to speak about 'the things themselves.' Thus, the reader of your work is challenged to self-appropriation. Would you address some remarks on the difference between education in a conceptualist or idealist mode and education from the standpoint of critical realism?

**Lonergan:** And the Scholastics had that idea too, although they used probable arguments too, but they tended to be regarded as arguments that didn't prove. Newton and especially the French rationalists thought empirical science was necessary. You had mechanist determinism ruling in science up to quantum theory, 1926. Then it began to be clear that any necessary law is abstract. It holds *caeteris paribus*, other things being equal. And whether or not other things are equal was not a matter of further laws but of statistics, of probabilities. The law of the lever is very clear and very exact ... But the number of levers that work is something statistical. It depends on how well they're made and how long they last, and so on. De facto, modern science is a matter not of discovering necessity but verifiable possibilities. Human understanding primarily is a matter of grasping something as possible. Insofar as you understand the possibility, you have science. And insofar as it has to be verified, which is another major canon of modern science, it's not necessary but possible; if it were necessary, people wouldn't have to bother with verifying. That's the trouble with the Scholastics.

Now, science is just probable truths, where are we? Well, in Aristotle and in Aquinas a distinction is drawn between conclusions which follow from premises and first premises which are grasped by understanding (*Nous*) and wisdom, which decides whether your terms in your first principles are sound or not. That rule of wisdom has been missing since the fourteenth century, with the distinction between *potentia Dei absoluta* and *potentia Dei ordinata*. Divine potency is conceivable abstracting from divine wisdom. There's a kind of divine power that's not wise, and another kind that is wise, well-ordered. *Potentia Dei absoluta*: they were content with the necessary connection between terms to get their principles. They didn't need any wisdom for that. And they ended in skepticism. They

discovered they couldn't prove anything. So the problem with modern science also existed in the fourteenth century. And the answer to it is wisdom. For Aristotle philosophy was the love of wisdom, the search for wisdom. Someone has remarked that Aristotle's *Metaphysics* was a book on method. There's a certain plausibility to that ... And I think today our wisdom is in terms of method, insofar as it's formulated. How far you can go on that, the general lines – I have an article in *Studies in Religion*, a Canadian journal that's bilingual; the article is in English, 'The Ongoing Genesis of Methods.'

On this business of a text in Aquinas on the way wisdom comes in – science is of conclusions, understanding or intellect is of first premises, and wisdom orders and passes judgment on the suitability of the terms and the principles, the setup and the connections between the terms – that is in Aquinas in *Summa theologiae*, 1-2, q. 66, a. 5, ad 4m. And there's a relevant passage in Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, II, 1, 993b 19 f.

Now why is philosophy so difficult? That's the universal complaint. Why is it so queer? The reason is very simple. We are successfully functioning animals before we learn to speak. And during that time, we have pretty good ideas, good tacit knowledge, of what's real and what isn't. As successfully functioning animals, we live in a habitat, with criteria of reality that don't differ too much from upper-class animals. When we learn to speak, write, learn languages and sciences, our fundamental needs are carried over from our initial state. And the critical problem in philosophy is to make it a need change. What do you mean by real? You don't mean what you put your paw on but the possible object of experience that you understand and affirm correctly: three things. And you can draw up a table of philosophic differences. By the mere fact of learning the language when you're not fully rational yet, that's what emphasized in Santayana's book *Skepticism and Animal Faith*. The average man has very firm convictions of reality. Where does he get them? Animal faith. That's the meaning he really he attaches to his words, like Dr. Johnson kicking the stone to refute Berkeley. The alternative to that for Santayana is skepticism. Critical realism is not an alternative.

Are there further questions on the chapter on meaning?

**Question:** You mentioned in an earlier class that Aquinas had a notion of horizon. I wonder if you could indicate the passages where that's implicit.

**Lonergan:** That he had a *notion* of horizon, I don't know that I'd say that. You can get it – what is Aquinas doing all the time? He's asking questions. The questions

are the fundamental part. Critical realism as I present it is something you can interchange with Aquinas very easily. I taught theology in Latin for twenty-five years. I was able to talk Aquinas and my own stuff at the same time. You can find all sorts of parallels between them. But he did not have contemporary ... A theology has to be on the level of its time. You always need *aggiornamento*. It's always needed, and people are always striving for it. Horizon is ... the questions you ask and/or the questions you answer – not in the sense that a fool can ask more questions than a wise man can answer.

(Moves on to lecture on the chapter on Religion)